DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 166 989 FL 010 138

AUTHOR	Lazaruk, Walter
TITLE	The Canadian Context and Second Languages in the Schools.
INSTITUTION	Alberta Teachers Association, Edmonton. Modern Language Council.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Barnett House (A.T.A.), Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5N 2R1 ($5.00 CDN yearly subscription, $2.25 CDN each back copy issue)
JOURNAL CIT	Alberta Modern Language Journal; v17 n1 p30-37 Fall 1978
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Bilingualism; Communicative Competence (Languages); *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Pluralism; Educational Benefits; Elementary Secondary Education; English; French; *Government School Relationship; Higher Education; Language Fluency; Language Instruction; *Language Role; Public Policy; *Second Language Learning
IDENTIFIERS	Alberta; *Canada

ABSTRACT

The official endorsement given to second languages by both the provincial and federal governments in Canada is reviewed, and reasons why second languages may be an important component of a basic education program are proposed. The question of which second language might be taught in schools is also addressed. The agreement to cooperate with the federal government to encourage bilingualism, and the policies and provisions for languages and cultures in provincial legislation are indicative of the legal basis and official endorsement given to English-French bilingualism and multiculturalism by the Government of Alberta. The schools may play an important role in implementing these policies and agreements. Schools could help students acquire a set of communication skills in another language, and this would help foster an understanding and tolerance of different cultures that comprise the communities. Additionally, competence in a second language may be useful as an auxiliary or as a primary skill in many careers. From a global perspective, second languages may assist students to broaden their understanding of the nature of the world and of the nature of man. The decision of which second language to teach may be made by each community. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

The Canadian Context and Second Languages in the Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

S DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-ED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN-NG IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS TED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE-T OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF UCATION POSITION OR POLICY

by *Walter Lazaruk*
Alberta Education

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS ATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gaston R. Renaud
AMLT Editor

O THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES NFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND SERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

During the current debate in Canada over languages, it seems appropriate to examine some aspects of the Canadian context to determine the role of second languages in schools. In this article, I wish to review the official endorsement given to second languages by both the provincial and federal governments. Also, I would like to propose some reasons why second languages may be an important component of a basic education program. Finally, I will address myself to the question of which second languages might be taught in schools. At a time in our history when both Canadian unity and basic education are being discussed, it is important to clarify the role of second languages in schools.

The Canadian context has a significant influence on the inclusion of second languages in schools. The learning of French as a second language, for example, is a federal priority, demonstrated by the creation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and by the passage of the *Official Languages Act* in parliament. Furthermore, Volume Four of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism recognized the rights of other ethnic groups to preserve and to maintain their languages and cultures in the educational system. Shortly after the issuance of this report, the Government of Canada announced a multicultural policy which established the idea of a multicultural Canada within an official English-French bilingual context. This acceptance of cultural pluralism is advanced in statements such as the following:

> "Canadian identity will not be undermined by multiculturalism. Indeed, we believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. To say we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more 'official' than another. The policy for all multiculturalism must be a policy for all Canadians."[1]

At the provincial level, the Government of Alberta, along with all provincial governments, entered into an agreement in 1970 with the Government of Canada in a program known as the Federal-Provincial Program of Cooperation for Bilingualism in Education. The two objectives of this program are notable:

1. to provide an increased opportunity for Canadians of the majority official language group in each province to acquire a knowledge of their second official language;
2. to provide an increased opportunity for Canadians of the minority official language group in each province to be educated in their own language.[2]

---

[1]J.B. Rudnyckyj. "Communicating in a Multicultural Society." *Alberta Modern Language Journal*, 12, 2, Winter 1973-74, p.19.

[2]Phillip Lamoureux and James Jones. "Cooperation for Bilingualism in Education: the Federal-Provincial Program." *Alberta Modern Language Journal*, 15, 3, Spring 1977, p.24.

In addition to entering into an agreement with the federal government, the Government of Alberta formulated the Cultural Heritage Policy in 1972 to recognize the multicultural reality in Alberta. Two specific objectives of this policy are:

1. to give Albertans increasing pride and identity as a people;
2. to unite us in a singular strength through understanding of our individual ethno-backgrounds: the sharing of our cultural diversity and richness, and appreciation of our evolving identity.[3]

Moreover, the Department of Education in Section 150 of *The School Act* allows school jurisdictions to use French and other languages as languages of instruction. Accompanying regulations, for example, permit instruction in French up to 80% of the school day. It also should be mentioned that Ukrainian is used as a language of instruction up to 50% of the school day.

SECOND LANGUAGES AS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF A BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM.

In summary, the agreement to cooperate with the federal government to encourage bilingualism, and the policies and provisions for languages and cultures in provincial legislation are indicative of the legal basis and official endorsement given to English-French bilingualism and to multiculturalism by the Government of Alberta. In order to implement these policies and agreements, the schools may play a very important role.

MULTICULTURAL CANADA WITHIN AN OFFICIAL ENGLISH-FRENCH BILINGUAL CONTEXT.

The last few years have witnessed numerous efforts to improve second language education in the schools in response to the political reality in Canada. Important sectors of the public

[3]Position Paper No. 7, Alberta Cultural Heritage. November 1972.

have postulated that the schools through second languages could contribute significantly to foster a greater understanding and accommodation of our cultural and linguistic communities.

Firstly, schools could help students to acquire a set of communication skills in another language. Through a second language, students can develop the ability to communicate directly with people who speak other languages as natives and with a great number who have learned a language as a second language.

SCHOOLS COULD FOSTER A GREATER UNDERSTANDING.

This ability to communicate orally and in writing in a second language is useful in Canada, where there are two official languages and also other languages which are used for communication purposes by many of its citizens. If a society is to work cooperatively with people of different cultures and languages, there is a need for a sufficient number of citizens who are able to communicate in second languages. Schools in future years may respond to this pluralistic reality by recognizing that some knowledge of a second language is part of basic literacy in Canada.

THERE IS A NEED FOR CITIZENS TO COMMUNICATE IN SECOND LANGUAGES.

Also, competence in a second language may be useful as an auxiliary or as a primary skill in many careers. Examples of such careers are:

1. export and import business
2. airline and shipping companies
3. travel agencies, tour leaders
4. hotels and resorts
5. translators and interpreters for hospitals and clinics
6. journalism
7. manufacturing and trading
8. federal civil service
9. national and international agencies
10. teaching[4]

[4]Angelo Cohn. *Careers with Foreign Languages*. New York: Henry Z. Walck Inc., 1963, p.15.

Furthermore, second languages could foster an understanding and tolerance of different cultures that comprise our communities:

> Such an experience reveals to the student that there are other ways to say things, other values and attitudes than those to which his native language and culture have habituated him. Through this process, he may develop new attitudes to ideas and people that will reduce his bondage to the familiar and local, while increasing his sympathy for persons of other cultures and languages.[5]

This understanding appears essential to an enlightened citizenry. Second languages, in this view, provide the laboratory where students can develop an understanding of a culture as they are learning to express themselves in that culture. To quote from *A Choice of Futures:*

> Effective language learning results in a broadening experience for the individual by providing him with the means of viewing his world from a different perspective. He gets this perspective by entering into the culture of other people, through a knowledge of their language.[6]

In Canada, this understanding of culture is particularly important. Our country is officially bilingual in a multicultural context. Approximately one-quarter of our citizens are French-speaking. In addition, cultural groups who speak other languages have made a valuable contribution to this country. The rights of these cultural groups to maintain their languages are recognized.

SOME KNOWLEDGE OF A SECOND LANGUAGE IS PART OF BASIC LITERACY IN CANADA.

More globally, second languages may assist students to broaden their understanding of the nature of the world and of the

---

[5]Wilga M. Rivers. *Speaking in Many Tongues.* Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1972, p.134.

[6]Report of the Commission on Educational Planning. *A Choice of Futures.* Edmonton: Queen's Printer for the Province of Alberta, 1972, p.188.

nature of man. In the world characterized by increased mobility, improved transportation and communication, and a growing awareness of the pluralistic society, such an understanding may assist students to make choices that allow them to live effectively in local, national, and international communities.

SECOND LANGUAGE MAY BE USEFUL IN MANY CAREERS.

In addition to cultural understanding and communication skills, second language learning could promote an understanding of the nature of language and an understanding of how to learn a second language. Through the study of word families, cognates, synonyms and syntax, students acquire insights into the English language. Other benefits include increased ease in travelling and enjoyment in leisure activities.

SECOND LANGUAGES FOSTER AN UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES.

These educational benefits will be attained only in programs that encourage a degree of facility that extends beyond the simple exchange of everyday banalities, and in programs which permit students to become acquainted with important aspects of culture in which the language is a part. More specifically, it seems important that levels of competence be defined in a program and that sufficient instructional time be allotted. Similarly, provision should be made for quality instruction by attention to teacher qualifications, instructional modes, and good learning materials.

CANADA IS OFFICIALLY BILINGUAL IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT.

For the question of which second languages to teach, it is suggested that this decision be made consciously by each community to reflect its aspirations. In a multicultural context such

as Alberta, community interests may vary. Some communities may desire to maintain and to develop the Cree, French, German, or Ukrainian language. Other communities may be more interested in developing a national perspective and place an emphasis on learning French. Within the large urban communities, it is anticipated that an interest in international languages such as Spanish will develop. Where sufficient interest is expressed in languages which involve only a small number of students, provisions to offer these languages on a locally-developed basis should be readily available. This is currently the situation for Hungarian, Italian, and Polish. Essentially, factors that school jurisdictions could take into account in selecting a second language or languages include geographical location and the relative importance and potential use of the language in local, national, and international situations.

SECOND LANGUAGES ASSIST STUDENTS TO BROADEN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF WORLD AND OF MAN.

Languages other than English are the essential means of communication for the majority of the world's citizens. A second language as part of a school experience can help students to live with greater satisfaction in our pluralistic society. The essential understandings and skills that can be acquired may produce a more enlightened citizenry.

* * * * * *

Bibliography

Cohn, Angelo. *Careers with Foreign Languages*. New York: Henry Z. Walck Inc., 1963.

Commissioner of Official Languages. *Annual Reports, 1975-76.*

Lamoureux, Phillip and Jones, James. "Cooperation for Bilingualism in Education: the Federal-Provincial Program." *Alberta Modern Language Journal*, 15, 3, 23 - 31, Spring 1977.

Lupil, Manoly R. "The Politics of Ukrainian Bilingualism in Alberta." *Alberta Modern Language Journal*, 14, 1, 31 - 37, Fall 1975.

Malycky, Alexander. "The Meaning of Multiculturalism." *Alberta Modern Language Journal*, 12, 2, 5 - 8, Winter 1973-74.

Ontario Ministry of Education (1974). *Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Teaching of French.* (The Gillin Report). Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1974.

Parker, Douglas V. *The Alberta Modern Language.* Edmonton: Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, 1975.

Parker, Douglas V. *French as a Second Language - A Choice of Program Options* (A Working Paper). Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1977.

Position Paper No. 7. Alberta Cultural Heritage, November 1972.

Report of the Commission on Education Planning: *A Choice of Futures.* Edmonton: Queen's Printer for the Province of Alberta, 1972.

Rivers, Wilga. *Speaking in Many Tongues.* Rowley Massachusetts: Newbury House, 1972.

Rudnyckyj, J.B. "Communicating in a Multicultural Society." *Alberta Modern Language Journal.* 12, 2, 9-20, Winter 1973-74.

Robertson, George. "A Challenge to the Spirit of Canadians." Notes on an Address to the Convocation, Dalhousie University, May 12, 1977.

Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism,* Books I-VI. Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967.